

LONESTAR NEWS

SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION, 2BDE

FOB KALSU, IRAQ



January 15, 2006



.Words from Lone Star 6

Mar Haba, (Hello in Arabic),

We hope this newsletter finds all of our friends and loved ones happy and safe. The good news story is that despite being in Iraq for only about a month, we've officially been deployed for almost 45 days. Each day we get closer to mission accomplishment over here which brings us a step closer to home.

We remain extremely busy as we try to maintain our usual, high-level of support across an area that is roughly 25,000 square miles, or about the size of West Virginia. So far, we are succeeding and the brigade is making great strides in helping the Iraqis create a safer, more democratic environment, despite what the news may be reporting. We thank you for all of your support.

The Lonestar MiTT continues to work with their counterparts in the 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Division. They are coaching the staff on the military decision making process and are helping the soldiers of the brigade headquarters company learn some new basic soldier skills. This experience has been wonderful and has allowed us to get to know and understand that our Iraqi allies are, in many ways, similar to us.

The Hurricanes are doing a stellar job at keeping the operating base safe, maintaining all of our Soldiers and equipment. Their most visible job, securing and safeguarding detainees, has already received a lot of attention from our higher headquarters in the form of inspections and assistance visits. The MPs, as well as all of the other Soldiers who are working down there, are doing an exceptionally professional job.

The Stalkers continue to comb the countryside and villages for intelligence. Some of their finds have already led to the capture of mid-level insurgents. After a grueling struggle to deconflict airspace and frequencies, we will finally get to fly the TUAV. We are truly excited and will include some pictures in our next newsletter.

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Happy Hurricanes: Members of HHC prep for another day at Kalsu.

Promotions

PFC Ibarra
SPC Warner
SFC Hernandez
SSG Moton
CPL Evans
CPL Pierce
PFC Nairn

Births

SGT Devere



Long awaited: LTC Muraski promotes SSG Hernandez to SFC.

The Bulldogs continue to maintain our communications network. They are diligently working to cover our vast area of operations but their intelligence and technical expertise, combined with their creativity and resourcefulness, will soon bridge that gap. They have already come up with some truly ingenious solutions to our problems.

Bulldog and Stalker are probably the most spread out companies in the Brigade as they are both located on three different operating bases. Stalker and Hurricane are together providing most of our patrol capabilities as the FOX platoon and the MPs travel both north and south on a weekly basis. We make sure to also always carry a mechanic and a medic with us in order to cover any contingency.

The Brigade lost five Soldiers last week. Several of us were able to attend the memorial service to show support for the Thunder Battalion. It was a sad day, but important to everyone here, even the people who did not know the Soldiers well, to help in the healing process. I ask for your prayers for the families of the fallen Soldiers, for the rest of us and for the Iraqis themselves to have the strength and fortitude to see this effort through to completion.

As we travel around the countryside and through the towns we see signs of a long, ongoing struggle - damaged buildings, graffiti and piles of trash. We also see great effort to improve the area - Iraqi soldiers and policemen providing security in busy markets, people everywhere working to improve their living conditions, and smiling children who always seem to run to the road to wave to us. Please believe that we are as safe as possible. We are a well-trained and well-equipped unit and our Soldiers and leaders remain well motivated, constantly watching each other's back. We are slowly making this a better place.

The response to Private Talk has been wonderful so our guest writer has agreed to contribute another letter for this newsletter.

PRIVATE TALK

Well it has been about a month now here on FOB Kalsu. I think I am doing pretty well, as are most of the Soldiers here. There have definitely been a lot of things happening around FOB Kalsu lately and all over Iraq for that matter. We have had some good days and some bad. Most of the Soldiers have been handling both with a seemingly unbreakable integrity. I think that everyone knows we are here to do a job, and everyone is willing to do what it takes to complete it. Personally, I have had a sense of disbelief though. Back in Fort Hood, I would watch the news and hear of happenings here in Iraq and have time to think about every part of them.

Now that I am here it is kind of like a car accident. You don't really know what happened until it is all over and you have a chance to talk about it. In these moments, I must thank my leadership for the guidance and training they have instilled in myself and those around me. When things start happening your training and the people around you are the only things that you can count on. I have found out what most of the Soldiers favorite thing about this place is. It's every other day of the week. MAIL. Man do these people love mail. Doesn't matter what it is, how big or small it is, or who it is from. From what I can tell everyone would rather get mail than eat. It is kind of funny because on the days when we don't have a mail run, there is always at least one person who asks if we got mail that day, which just makes everyone that much more tense and anxious about getting it. You should see it. Even the higher ranking Soldiers light up like little kids at Christmas every time they get a package or a letter.

So, pretty much everything here seems to be running pretty smoothly. Chow is good, laundry only takes a day, and DVDs are cheap. I guess I can't complain too much. But I do miss home though. Especially beer, "just thought I would slip that in." I do miss my family too, just like everyone else here. A month down and only eleven more to go. Not too bad, considering how it felt when we were just starting. I have a feeling this year is going to pass very fast and we will all be back together with our families and friends before we know it. I do ask that you all keep us in our hearts and prayers; you will definitely be in ours.

I wish all of you well and thank you for the outstanding support that you've shown our Soldiers. Please stay safe and take care of yourselves. We want to return to the same beautiful faces that we left a few months ago.

Shukran (thanks) for all you do.
Lone Star 6



Combat Vets: Bravo Company Soldiers set up communication systems for all of 2nd BCT.

HHC Hurricanes

Aloha from the front, our paradise away from home! After over a month on the ground, the Hurricanes are finally settled in and hard at the task of supporting the Brigade. The Law Dogs (MP's) have assumed control of the detention facility and with support from the battalion, are doing an excellent job. Long hours and a very demanding environment require their section to be perfect every time. The Junkyard Dogs (Maintenance) have moved into their little piece of heaven in the motor pool. Responsible for the maintenance of more than 75 vehicles, they keep the battalion and the brigade staff moving and the parts flowing, never missing a beat. In addition, they are frequently called on to support patrols in the area. The Chowhounds (Dining facility) are in and working, already implementing several noticeable improvements such as a chili / taco bar and working long hours every day ensuring we are all fat and happy. Oh yes, most importantly, they keep an ample supply of beer available for us. If they could only figure out how to put the alcohol back in.... All us Big Dogs (company staff) keep busy coordinating all the moving pieces, deflecting bullets coming from higher, and ensuring your Soldiers continue to get promoted and paid, which is high on everyone's list! In addition, the Hurricanes also handle several smaller missions each day. Needless to say, we are a busy crew. Although we have been lucky so far, we constantly stress safety and make improvements to our ways of conducting business, to ensure each and every one of us return in the same condition we left. New Year's was a quiet holiday this year. I'd venture a guess most of us slept through it! For the more adventurous, there was a bash at the dining facility, where good times and sobriety abounded! The amount of mail we continue to receive is almost overwhelming, and I know it is the highlight of your Soldiers' day. Thank you all for supporting them and making my job easier by helping to keep up the morale. Life is not bad here, with access to e-mail and phones, finance, postal facilities, a gym, and of course, the infamous "Haji-mart." During the past two weeks, we had the privilege of promoting SSG Hernandez to SFC, PFC Warner to Specialist and PV2 Nairn to PFC. We also learned we must say farewell to our XO, 1LT Ryan, as he moves on to 1-67 AR to take a platoon there. We know they will be well led by him. 2LT Townsell has big shoes to fill as she moves up to the XO position, but we know she will be up to the task. While all your Hurricanes would rather be home with you, they understand the importance of our job here, and they perform every mission with the highest degree of professionalism and competence. Keep the home fires burning and the packages coming!

HURRICANE 6

CPT David Bolender



Words from the Chaplain

Hola Lonestar Family, I hope that you are all doing well. We just started a new year and it has started with a lot of challenges, happiness and sadness.

I watched the night service that we had here at Kalsu, and I was encouraged to propose or reaffirm three things in life. I will share these things with you now:

1. Place God before your every step; Psalm 16:8 says: "I have set The Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." No matter how simple or difficult thing you are doing, just include God in it.

2. Do your best to present yourself approvingly before God. Life is not easy and hard times will come, but in all of the decisions you make, do your best to make them according to God's approval.

3. Have your personal devotional time. Make sure that every single day of your life you have a moment that just belongs to you and God, in the same way you feed your body daily, nourish your relationship with God daily.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91)



Too many chiefs: SPC Bachmann troubleshoots some issues in order to get the TUAV flying.

Alpha Company Stalkers

Happy New Year! It's been an exciting year thus far--all 15 days of it. We're working hard, but it's tolerable because we are in a rewarding profession. The company area has recently been upgraded with satellite television, making it easier to keep up with current events and even watch the "big game" (shhh...don't let the Commander know). Morale is high, thanks to our unit cohesiveness and your support back home.

Continue to keep in touch with your loved ones serving over here.

The TUAV platoon has begun to make a home for themselves here at Kalsu. After much negotiation, a runway has finally been built for the Launch and Recovery Site. Eventually it will be a spa, but for now we are settling for meager offices constructed in the middle of a giant mud hole on either side of the runway. Our first mission flight was on the 12th, and we are looking forward to performing our role as the central imagery intelligence asset for the brigade.

SSG Ward flew to Taji with SFC (P) Moore to begin his Readiness Level Progression Training. SFC (P) Moore will be leaving us permanently, to assume first sergeant duties in Taji for the consolidated TUAV company there. We wish them both the best, and hope SSG Ward doesn't get too comfortable, so that he'll come back to us at the "oasis" quickly. PFC Gamiao, PFC Blair, PFC Velilla and SPC Wisniewski are all particularly glad that we finally have missions, as each of them had taken a 3-day tour manning Guard Tower 4. SGT McDonald and PFC Arons have been keeping an eye on the brigade, as the 24-hour TUAV resident experts resigned to sitting in the TOC and answering pertinent TUAV questions. All send their best to their loved ones in the States, and say to keep the packages coming!

FOX platoon is running missions in the new M1114's (up-armored humvees). So far they have been to Baghdad a couple of times, and they were able to see some of Saddam's old palaces. The most amazing part of Baghdad are the amenities those Soldiers have at their disposal, to include: a movie theater, an indoor pool, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Subway, a Zip Cleaners, a beauty shop and THE Super Wal-Mart PX. It's like Disneyland compared to Kalsu.

STALKERS LEAD THE WAY!

Bravo Company Bulldogs

Greetings from Iraq. The Bulldogs continue to perform well over here and are settling into a routine. Our big focus now is maintaining the communications network and the equipment that supports it.

The weather is still pretty cool over here dipping into the lower 40s and upper 30s at night. We will miss it once it begins to heat up. It has been raining over the last few days as well, which is making everything a mess. We will probably continue to get rain through the next couple of months and again we will miss it when it is gone.

We have had one promotion since that last newsletter; Private First Class Ibarra was promoted to Specialist. He is our Signal Maintenance Specialist and has been working closely with Alpha Company's Electronic Maintenance team to set us up for success when our equipment inevitably begins to fail under the harsh conditions that we are running it in.

It has been brought to my attention that many of you would like more information on the type of communications systems our company runs for the brigade. I will begin this week with a spotlight on our 25C's. These Soldiers install and operate the backbone for what we call the lower tactical internet. This is basically a series of radios that provide a wireless data network throughout the brigade's area of operation. Think of it like the wireless routers you can buy at any electronics store for your home, but on a much larger scale. Instead of surfing the internet over this network, it provides situational awareness to our "subscribers," the command posts and vehicles as they move around the battle space. The "subscribers" are then able to see each other's location, so we know where other friendly units are located. They are also able to send messages and reports to each other so we know what is going on around us. It is a critical system to brigade as it provides near real-time understanding of movements and events as they unfold.

We will be beginning the Environmental / Morale Leave program soon which will be a nice break for the Soldiers and the families. I think that we have a good plan in place to get most of the Soldiers home for special events in their lives. As with everything in the military, there will be some changes and we will not be able to get everyone home when they want. I just ask that everyone remain flexible and patient as there are sure to be some bumps in the road as we get this started.

Everyone continues to do a great job and I maintain that these Soldiers are setting the standard for the other Signal companies in the division. I want to thank all of the families for their sacrifices and continued support of our Soldiers, it really means a lot to them and to me.

Bulldog 6 out.